

Times Your Community

Vote Yes on Measures V and W

By Councilmember Rose Herrera

Special to the Times
Are you tired of all the city service cuts? Are you tired of the higher fees? Are you tired of how little is covered by your city taxes? Have your voice heard by voting Yes on Measures V and W on Nov. 2.

How will Measures V and W help you? Finally, you will have the power to help the city bring employee costs in line with reality by voting **yes** on Measure V and Measure W. These measures will update the City Charter, allowing the City Council to bring about pension and arbitration reforms.

Measure V limits the powers of binding arbitration. What is arbitration? Currently, whenever the city and one of its police or fire unions has an unresolved dispute over wages, hours or working conditions, a three person Arbitration Board will arbitrate the problem. Both sides are

required to accept the decision of the outside Arbitration Board. What this means for the city is that we have to pay those salaries and benefits no matter what. Even if that means closing libraries, closing community centers, and increasing fees for all services.

Measure V puts the breaks on outside arbitrators. It brings common sense limits on the powers of unaccountable, unelected outside arbitrators. Measure V prohibits arbitrators from giving pay raises that exceed the average increase in revenues over the past five years, giving retroactive benefits and creating unfunded liabilities. For example, in 2007, an outside



District 8 Report

By Rose Herrera
City Councilmember

arbitrator granted a pension increase to firefighters, many of whom now enjoy six-figure pensions. That decision created a projected unfunded liability of \$30 million. You, the taxpayer, pays that bill. These changes make sense and must happen for San Jose to gain control of its budget.

Measure W, which I co-signed, reforms our pension system by allowing the City Council to change retirement benefits for new hires. It does not impact current employees. Measure W is a reflection of the times. Ten years ago, the City of San José spent \$62 million on retirement benefits. Last fiscal year, we spent

\$135 million, a 218 percent increase. At this rate, pensions will cost San Jose taxpayers \$350 million a year by 2015. That's more money than property taxes and sales taxes combined.

Currently, the City Charter requires that the city provide employees with a defined retirement plan, an employer match of 250 percent, a retirement age of 55, and city guaranteed benefits for life based on final compensation. Measure W will allow the City to create a different retirement plan for new hires.

How wonderful it would be to bring back a few more hours of library time, fill a few more potholes, reinstitute vital SJPD task forces that were showing positive results. And hire more police officers and firefighters.

I believe that San Jose has some of the best employees and that they are hard working, professional and honest. Our need to change the structure of employee benefits is not about the value of city employees but about the ability for the city to be sustainable. If we don't bring employee costs

down to earth, all the citizens and businesses of San Jose will suffer.

Two key reports have been published that support the need for reform. They are titled: The City Auditor's Report, "Pension Sustainability: Rising Pension Costs Threaten the City's Ability to Maintain Service Levels-Alternatives for a Sustainable Future" and The 200-2010 Santa Clara County Civil Grand Jury Report, "Cities Must Rein in Unsustainable Employee Costs." You can find both of them on my website, www.sanjoseca.gov/district8.

I urge you to vote yes on Measure V and Measure W. Give those who represent you the ability to bring employee costs under control. You have the opportunity to improve your City and bring the necessary change we need to reign in costs.

Please feel free to contact my office with your concerns with this or other city issues by calling (408) 535-4908 or emailing district8@sanjoseca.gov.

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Evergreen Valley College president leaving for College of Marin

Trustees to begin searching for replacement with help from consulting firm

By Sheila Sanchez
Senior Staff Writer

Evergreen Valley College President Dr. David Wain Coon has accepted a job as president of the College of Marin. His last day with the 12,000-student college is Nov. 30.

On Sept. 22, College of Marin trustees announced that Coon, 46, had been appointed to serve as their new superintendent/president, replacing Frances L. White, who retired in June. He was among 64 applicants considered for the position. A search committee narrowed the field to 11 candidates and then five finalists, who met in a series of public meetings with students, staff, faculty and others.

Coon arrived at EVC in July of 2005, after working as vice president for student success at Cascadia Community College in the Washington State Community College System. He also held administrative positions at Green River Community College and The Art Institute of Seattle and Pierce College in Washington State.

During his tenure at EVC, Coon oversaw the completion of the college's \$38 million Center for the Arts, located on the south part of campus, at 3095 Yerba Buena Road, in Evergreen, as well as the college's accreditation. He's helping the college complete accreditation again before his departure. Coon's annual base salary as EVC president is \$188,000. College of Marin officials have not released his new salary.

"I am deeply honored and humbled to have been selected to be the next superintendent/president for College of Marin. I am very impressed with the college's long history and reputation for excellence," Coon said.

San Jose/Evergreen Community College District Trustee Mayra Cruz expressed sadness with the news of Coon's departure: "President Coon has been a visionary and action-oriented leader. His passion, love and commitment to EVC students, faculty and staff have been the engine for the change we have seen at EVC. Under his leadership, EVC has been commended for its graduation

rates. His understanding of our values of equity, opportunity and social justice created a new narrative and new conditions. President Coon is a phenomenal man who will be missed by many of us."

SJECCD Trustee Maria Fuentes said the district's board of trustees would work with a consulting firm to select Coon's replacement. She said the process would include community members, faculty, classified staff and managers. The district is currently using the same consulting firm that helped find the district's new chancellor, Dr. Rita Cepeda, to look for a president to lead San Jose City College, she said.

"He came in to the position with much respect from his peers in Washington State," Fuentes said. "He had never been a president before and he adjusted really well to the leadership position working very hard at bringing staff together. He was really interested in connecting and reaching out to the Evergreen community. He made it a point to see what



Dr. David Wain Coon

people wanted. He really cares about the students."

College of Marin Board of Trustees President Dr. Eva Long also called Coon a "visionary" leader who will help continue the institution's 84-year educational tradition. "Dr. Coon is a creative, innovative leader and brings a wealth of expertise, knowledge and experience which will greatly benefit the college community," said Long in a prepared press release.

Coon earned a bachelor's degree in communications and public relations from Central Washington University, a master's degree in student personnel administration from Western Washington University and a doctoral degree in educational leadership with emphasis in organizational development from Seattle University.

Coon was one of three finalists for the San Jose/Evergreen Community College District chancellor position. The district's Board of Trustees, however, selected Cepeda to lead the district this past summer.

Let us hear from you!

Readers are encouraged to submit story ideas and comments for publication in The Evergreen Times. Space is limited. Letters and email may be edited for clarity and must include identification. Comments must be received by Wednesday prior to the Saturday publication date to be included. Send your letter via email to jeanne@timesmediainc.com.

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